

Book Reviews

The Dressing Station

Jonathan Kaplan, 2002

Published by Picador (London) ISBN: 0330480790 Price £5.59 (Softback), pp 416

"The Dressing Station" is the autobiographical account of Jonathan Kaplan, a South African surgeon who has travelled throughout the world as a hospital surgeon, a flying doctor, a ship's medical officer and a battlefield surgeon. Additionally, it is an insight into the intricate processes of finding purpose and meaning in conditions, which are perilous and desperate to say the least.

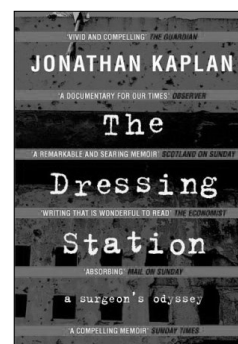
The autobiography demonstrates how a degree in medicine and specialization in surgery is not restricted by national borders and can only be limited by one's imagination. Through his travels, Jonathan Kaplan has been to South Africa, England, the USA, Namibia, Northern Iraq, the South China Sea, Mozambique, Burma, Brazil, and Eritrea to name but a few for the humanitarian effort. Worthy of note are Kaplan's descriptions of his surgical operations, which are vivid and detailed, allowing the reader to visualise and almost feel as if they are actually there, looking over the surgeon's shoulder.

One of the most fascinating of Kaplan's journeys is that to Northern Iraq at the end of the 1st Gulf War in an effort to aid the Kurdish freedom fighters injured in their skirmishes against the Iraqi Army. Full of despair, courage and danger, this chapter of Kaplan's life is absolutely riveting. It is an inspiration to anyone who is interested in working in regions of conflict for the benefit of those who have had the misfortune of living in a war zone. This story is a dynamic equilibrium of the grandeur provided by placing oneself in peril for the sake of vulnerable others and the insignificance felt

by one's contribution to a large-scale conflict, with many casualties, poor supplies and little or no medical, physical or emotional support.

At the other end of the spectrum of roles that Kaplan has undertaken, are his experiences as a documentary producer. In this role, his medical degree took a secondary place in favour of informing the British public about conditions of despair in Mozambique and Brazil. Undoubtedly this experience allowed Kaplan to face an inner conflict he had met in Northern Iraq, that of which option gives more fulfilment, helping one individual whose gratitude you can receive directly, or helping one thousand individuals but never being able to appreciate their gratitude. This fundamentally boils down to the question of whether it is more gratifying to help those less fortunate through medicine and personal contact or through science and technology, and which is actually most important for those on the receiving end of this service. Kaplan does not answer these questions in his text. This dilemma he leaves to the reader.

Overall, "The Dressing Station" varies from an intriguing read at its lightest moments to an inspirational and emotionally shaking experience at its most triumphant. It is a must read for anyone interested in sacrificing a little of themselves for the humanitarian effort.



Togay Koc

Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' School of Medicine

Atlas of Cosmetic Surgery

Michael Kaminer, Jeffrey Dover and Kenneth Arndt, 2002

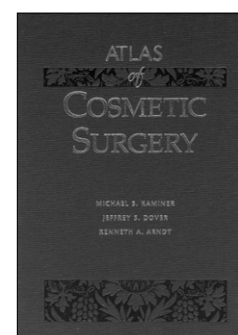
Published by W.B. Saunders Company (London) ISBN 0-7216-8413-0

Price £169 (Hard back), pp 476

The Atlas of Cosmetic Surgery provides a 476 page attempt at a comprehensive review of a rather topical and intriguing subject - Cosmetic Surgery. The book is divided into three parts; evaluation of the cosmetic surgery patient, anaesthesia, and cosmetic surgery procedures and techniques. The first two parts only constitute about 25% of the book, however their inclusion provides a degree of depth and scope often lacking in other books of this nature. Furthermore there are some rather intriguing chapters such as; the history

of cosmetic surgery, beauty and society and psychological issues and their relevance to the cosmetic surgery patient. A major plus point for the book

are the 479 full colour illustrations which are often sublime and support the accompanying text very well. Full lists of references are also provided at the end of every chapter and this book would serve as a great starting point for research in this area.



There are however, some notable absences of real detail on 'core' cosmetic surgery procedures such as breast augmentation, rhinoplasty and abdominoplasty to name but a few. Although this is understandable considering that all three editors are Dermatologists and furthermore there is a dermatological bias amongst the chapter authors. Thus to name the book an 'Atlas of Cosmetic Surgery' and to claim that it is a "comprehensive and interdisciplinary textbook" in the preface is somewhat off the mark. Equally however, the chapters on the evaluation of the aging face, hair transplantation, leg vein management and scar management are a real treat and often omitted in other books of this nature.

Other criticisms of the book would include the fact that this particular speciality is advancing rapidly and some

Riaz Agha

Managing and Executive Editor, The Journal of Surgery

Fundamental Techniques of Plastic Surgery

Alan D. McGregor and Ian A. McGregor, 2000 10th edition,
Published by Churchill Livingstone ISBN: 0-443-06372-9 Price £54.99 (Soft back), pp 221

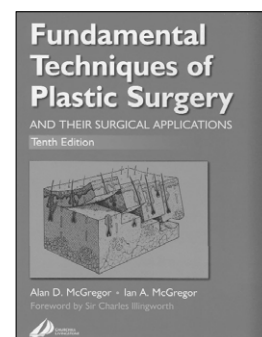
Fundamental Techniques of Plastic Surgery aims to deliver a concise text for trainees in this specialty. The first edition of the book was published in 1960 and since then the text has gone through a number of modifications and improvements. The book is divided into 2 parts: Basic Techniques and Surgical Applications. In 'Basic Techniques' the chapters include; wound management, the Z-plasty, free skin grafts, flaps and additional techniques. The chapter on wound management is particularly good and does well to set the scene for the rest of the book. In 'Surgical Applications' the chapters include; hypertrophic scars and keloids, radiation injury, pressure sore management, limb trauma, neoplastic conditions and hand surgery.

There is an obvious bias on limb reconstruction, and a similar level of detail is not applied when discussing breast reconstruction. This may be because the basic techniques can be more easily illustrated using the limbs. The entire book is written by the same group of authors and this helps to maintain a consistency of style and expression which can suffer in some multi-author books.

The chapters are certainly concise and describe each basic technique with precision and clarity. This helps to make the book easier to carry and this can be particularly useful reading for the trainee wherever they find themselves. There is little discussion and debate of the controversial issues and there is little mention of the latest techniques which are yet to be fully approved or accepted. There is little reference to the literature and

of the techniques described would be out of date by the time readers assimilate the information (but you have to start somewhere). The price could also be seen as a deterrent; however, it is a hardback printed in full colour with 479 illustrations, good paper quality and the price is also consistent with other books of this genre currently on the market.

Overall, this book provides some unique insights in particular areas of cosmetic surgery, but falls short of being a comprehensive review. Nevertheless, the inclusion of certain chapters not featured in other books of this nature makes it a worthwhile addition to the reference collection of the cosmetic surgeon or plastic surgical trainee..



most of the information is based on the clinical experience of the editorial team. This could lead to a bias in the description of what is the 'standard technique'; however in a book of basic techniques such bias is easily avoided and not visible in any case. Furthermore, such limitation of the scope of the book is necessary considering the target market of the book (Plastic Surgery trainees) and also helps to focus the reader on the main points and keep the text light and fresh.

Criticisms of the book would include the black and white illustrations and photos - this can be a real problem in particular sections of the book where anatomical drawings are displayed and for a soft back at £54.99 one would expect there to be colour pictures. The price seems high but there are few alternatives currently on the market and this leaves trainees with little choice. However, there are plenty of illustrations and photos which complement the text. The 10th edition also saw the removal of the chapter on maxillofacial injuries. This could be viewed as a good or bad development, but it should be taken into account nonetheless.

Overall, this book is incredibly useful for the Plastic Surgery trainee in helping them to develop the basic knowledge they will need to accompany the clinical experience they gain on the wards and in theatre.

Riaz Agha

Managing and Executive Editor, The Journal of Surgery